



CITY OF DANBURY
155 DEER HILL AVENUE
DANBURY, CONNECTICUT 06810

ZONING COMMISSION
(203) 797-4525
(203) 797-4586 (FAX)

MINUTES
JUNE 9, 2009

~~~~~  
The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ted Farah at 7:35 PM.

Present were Anthony DiCaprio, Theodore Haddad Jr., Patrick Johnston, Richard P. Jowdy, David Manacek, Robert Melillo, Larry Stramiello, Andrew Wetmore and Alternate Thomas Spegnolo. Also present was Deputy Planning Director Sharon Calitro.

Absent were Alternates Victoria Hickey and Jacqueline Perez-Ares.

Mr. Melillo led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Melillo made a motion to accept the minutes of the May 26, 2009 meeting. Mr. Johnston seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

~~~~~  
PUBLIC HEARING:

7:30 PM – Petition of Sympaug Properties LLC to Amend Secs. 2.B., 6.A.2., 6.A.5. & 8.C.4. of the Zoning Regulations. (Add "Indoor Field Sports Arena" as a Special Exception use to the IL-40 zone.)

Mr. Wetmore read the legal notice. Mr. Melillo read the Planning Dept. Staff Report. Chairman Farah read the Planning Commission recommendation. He also read a letter from Attorney Robin Kahn stating that the applicants have no objection to the proposed changes in the Planning Dept. Staff Report.

Attorney Robin Kahn spoke in favor of this petition saying that indoor field sports arenas are compatible with other uses in IL40 such as gymnasiums and sports centers. She added that gyms etc. are one of several non-industrial uses permitted in this zone. The peak hours for this arena are different from the peak hours for industrial uses, so this is a good companion use for an industrial neighborhood. She added that this use will fill a need in our area especially by allowing sports to be played on a year round basis inside of a structure designed for this purpose. It will promote health and fitness because it can be in operation year round. There are a limited number of parcels in the City that meet the requirements, approximately fourteen of them, but most already have large buildings on them. She added that the air structures they are proposing are a very specific type and are quite unique. She said they are environmentally very "green" because their panels allow daylight in, so very little energy used. She said they decided to make this a Special Exception use to give the Planning Commission a level of control regarding how many of these structures can be approved in the City. She said she would turn this over to the representative from the company to give them more information about the actual structure.

Dan Frioli, Asati Air structures said he has been building these types of structures since 1962. He said his company has been instrumental in the developing the air structure industry which started with just tennis but has grown to include softball, baseball, soccer, lacrosse, football and even indoor golf ranges. He added that the Baltimore Orioles even use one. He said his company has been first with air structures in each sport and technology has allowed them to improve their product greatly. This is a multi-sports facility that is a turnkey operation and can be rearranged, adjusted, added or subtracted to as needed. The site they are hoping to design for Danbury will be a baseball facility. It can be made with two domes but the most economically feasible design is a single dome. This single dome can be divided into four fields and would have batting cages because having a place to train is as important as having a place to play. The design also includes a clubhouse which can be inside or can be an exterior unit placed on a slab. He said the site they are looking at as well as the proposed use lends itself to a one dome structure. He added that they have gotten input from the pros and all of the structures are designed as a permanent building so they satisfy all engineering requirements. All materials and construction have been approved by the BOCA code. He continued saying they don't take any shortcuts, they have proven they can withstand snow loads and all of the materials are non-combustible. There are no steel supports, just fabric, so there is no danger of collapse or fire. Even if they did collapse, no one would be hurt because it is all air supported and in over forty years never been a fire in one of these structures.

Chairman Farah asked if this can be taken down by letting air out. Mr. Frioli said they do that with tennis facilities but would rather not do that because this is a larger structure. He added that in East Windsor there is a year round operating full size soccer facility. Chairman Farah asked if there was anyone else to speak in favor of this.

Gary Simone, Park Ave., said he coached in Danbury for over 33 years and has run the Park & Recreation program in Easton CT for the last 13 years. He said he is really excited over this because Danbury is and always has been really stressed for facilities. This is a state of the art facility which will help keep the kids involved year round. It is definitely a win-win situation.

Lynn Waller, 83 Highland Ave., said this sounds like a really good idea. She then asked if there are going to be bars within this. Also how tall will this building be and how will it compare to the tallest building in Danbury.

Mitch Hoffman from the Bobby Valentine Sports Academy in Stamford CT, said their facility is not even half the size of the one they are looking to build here, but it has benefitted their community greatly. He added that having the ability to offer the kids year round training definitely enhances the whole team sports experience.

When Chairman Farah asked who else wanted to speak in favor of this, about ten or twelve people in the audience raised their hands. One person said they are all in favor but have no specific comments prepared, so they asked that it just be noted in the record that they were here in favor of this.

Mike Cormier, 148 Great Plain Rd., said he has been doing research on this for a couple of years and believes this will benefit the surrounding communities. It is a very positive thing.

Attorney Kahn said there is no intention to serve alcohol, they only plan a food concession stand. She added that the maximum height is 125 ft. which is necessary for baseball. Mr. Haddad asked if this would be operational year round and Attorney Kahn said yes.

Another man named Cliff said he represents a soccer league in CT and they have access to a facility like this. Although their facility is open only in the winter and mostly in the evenings, they are constantly busy with kid's programs, leagues and tournaments. He added that in a sixteen week period, there are over 240 soccer teams utilizing the three field operation. Their operation could serve 20,000 kids so there is great opportunity for a facility of this size in a city the size of Danbury.

Mr. DiCaprio made a motion to close the public hearing. Mr. Manacek seconded the motion and it was passed with five AYES (from Mr. DiCaprio, Mr. Haddad., Mr. Johnston, Mr. Jowdy and Mr. Manacek) and four NAYS (from Mr. Melillo, Mr. Stramiello, Mr. Wetmore and Chairman Farah). Mr. DiCaprio made a motion to move this matter to number one under Old Business. Mr. Johnston seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

~~~~~  
OLD BUSINESS FOR CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:

Petition of Sympaug Properties LLC to Amend Secs. 2.B., 6.A.2., 6.A.5. & 8.C.4. of the Zoning Regulations. (Add "Indoor Field Sports Arena" as a Special Exception use to the IL-40 zone.)

Mr. Melillo made a motion to approve this petition with the changes recommended by the Planning Director in the Staff Report. Mr. Wetmore seconded the motion. The following reasons were given for this motion:

- This amendment will allow a use that is compatible with the other uses in the zone while helping to satisfy a demonstrated need in the community

Chairman Farah did a roll call vote and the motion to approve this as amended was passed unanimously.

~~~~~

There was nothing under New Business, Correspondence, Other Matters or For Reference Only. Chairman Farah said they would be cancelling the next meeting (which was scheduled for June 23, 2009) because there was nothing to put on the agenda.

At 9:15 PM, Mr. Melillo made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Wetmore seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.